

Request for Proposal

For Jackson, Mississippi, Public School District Study

Responses must be submitted no later than 5:00 pm CST, December 29, 2017.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Jackson Public School District (JPS or the District), pursuant to an October 26, 2017, Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) among JPS, the Office of the Governor of the State of Mississippi, the Office of the Mayor of Jackson, Mississippi, and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, has launched a student-focused, community-based initiative designed to transform JPS into a high-achieving public school district in order to meet the needs of its 25,000-plus students. This Request for Proposal (RFP) is issued pursuant to the MOU in order to identify and contract with a highly-qualified education organization to study JPS and to report and advise the Better Together Commission (BTC), formed pursuant to the MOU, by no later than November 29, 2018, as to identified challenges facing JPS and strategies to address those challenges.

BACKGROUND

JPS is an urban school district comprising 58 public school sites with over 25,000 pre-K-12 students, and over 4000 employees, representing more than 80% of the school-aged children residing in the state's capital city.

JPS faces a number of significant challenges:

Concurrent with out-migration from the city of Jackson, the District's student population has declined in each of the last 10 school years, dropping from over 31,000 students to slightly below 26,000, a decline of 17% since the 2007-2008 school year.

The student population in the District is 99% free/reduced lunch-eligible, reflective of the fact that approximately 31% of Jackson's population lives below the federal poverty level. Significant portions of the student population are homeless (16%), have identified disabilities (9%), or live in a shared residence (12%).

JPS's performance on the annual state-mandated test has declined significantly in recent years. This decline may be attributable in part to the changes in the state test. In 2014, 34% of the schools were rated A, B or C, whereas on the 2017 test 18% were so rated. Conversely, the number of D and F schools has increased from 66% to 82%, with 30 of the 58 schools - 52% - rated F in 2017.

As a result of a determination of violation of a significant number of state accreditation standards, JPS was placed on probation by the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) in August 2016, and in September 2017 MDE's board voted to take over JPS. Pursuant to that vote, MDE submitted to Governor Bryant a proposed declaration of emergency as required by

applicable law. Rather than execute the declaration, however, Governor Bryant conferred with Mayor Chokwe Antar Lumumba, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and numerous education experts in an effort to determine the course of action that would best serve the needs of JPS students. The MOU was entered into as a result, and the existing JPS school board resigned.

The MOU specifies, among other matters, that there be commissioned a student-centered assessment of JPS and that a plan of action be implemented based on the results of that assessment. The MOU specifies further that the parties' shared goal is to bring about transformational changes and to bolster student educational outcomes significantly.

This RFP is therefore issued in order to identify and retain an education resource that will address the above-stated challenges and that will advise the BTC and other designated community and state organizations on a plan of implementation to achieve the prescribed transformation of JPS.

SCOPE OF WORK – Required Services

Over a period of ten (10) months from contract execution, the successful applicant will:

1. Conduct a student-centered study that leads to the creation of a community-wide vision and plan of action to create an excellent, equitable education system that benefits all students in JPS. This study shall a) consider JPS's status at the school and district levels, including personnel, financial, curricular and organizational, b) shall identify specific areas of concern, and c) shall recommend specific strategies for addressing those concerns.
2. Support the development of short, intermediate and long-term goals for school and instructional improvement.
3. Interview diverse local stakeholders, including students enrolled in the District, to create a collective narrative of the community's perspective of JPS, including its successes and challenges.
4. Interview state education leaders to assess their perspectives of public education successes and challenges.
5. Provide a status report to the BTC throughout the study, on at least a monthly basis.
6. Consider comparable city and school district efforts to achieve systemic, sustained and measurable progress toward non-remediation college readiness and skill- based career readiness.
7. Share approaches to securing sustainable public education funding that creates equitable opportunity for all students to receive an excellent education aligned to college and career readiness.
8. Manage and disseminate data to diverse assembled audiences, offer recommendations for evidence-based interventions, and share available metrics and costs associated with the suggested strategies.
9. Collaborate with the BTC on the final scope of the study.

10. At the outset, meet with the BTC and the broader community to discuss issues, strategies, timelines and other relevant matters.
11. Devise all strategies with an emphasis on quality, equitable education for all children in JPS, especially children of color.
12. Work with the BTC to create an implementation strategy to include no-cost, low-cost and high-cost options as well as short- and long-term strategies, with specific discussion of scalability and sustainability.
13. Attend monthly community update meetings and provide audience-friendly materials to be disseminated at those meetings.

PROPOSAL COMPONENTS

Only qualified individuals or firms with significant experience on projects such as this should submit proposals in response to this RFP. The applicant must provide:

- The name of the organization, address for all relevant offices, telephone and fax numbers.
- Name, credentials and contact information for designated contact person or project manager.
- Type (nonprofit or for-profit), size of the organization and years of operation.
- Description of all previous related education projects/analyses, and contact/reference information so the BTC can contact the entities for which such projects/analyses were conducted.
- List of proposed staffing and team members, including short biographies. The key personnel (including the project manager) for this engagement should be identified separately with a more detailed resume and biography. Hourly rates should be specified.
- Detailed explanation of how the organization will approach the potential services.
- Detailed explanation of how the organization will work with the community and other civic organizations throughout the duration of the work.
- Description of the organization's commitment to customer service and quality assurance.
- Proposed schedule and key milestones.
- Price proposal of not more than one page. This price proposal should indicate the overall fixed price for the project, as well as hourly rates and an estimated total number of hours, should a contract be awarded on an hourly-rate basis.
- If the organization has a standard set of terms and conditions, they should be submitted with the proposal. All terms and conditions will be subject to negotiation.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Responses to this RFP will be evaluated by the BTC using the following criteria:

- Understanding of evidenced-based, best-practice models that ensure quality, accountability and equitable outcomes for all students, regardless of race, gender or socio-economic background.
- Demonstrated expertise in education system reform initiatives and experience working with, and on behalf of, diverse communities/organizations.
- Experience in tackling transformational challenges and college and career readiness issues.
- Demonstrated ability to use data to set priorities and target actions.
- Organizational and personnel qualifications and experience with weight given to experience of team, including:
 - In-depth knowledge and understanding of federal, state and local educational policy; and
 - Relationships, connections and knowledge of a broad range of education stakeholders and organizations
- Articulated approach for working collaboratively with community, business, and philanthropy in Jackson, Mississippi.
- Project cost, including personnel, direct & indirect costs, and travel expenses.

SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

Responses to this RFP are due December 29, 2017, at 5:00 PM (CST). Proposals should be sent via email to: bettertogetherms@gmail.com. All questions should be submitted in writing to this email address.

TIMELINE

ACTION ITEMS	DATES
RFP Announced	Dec. 4, 2017
Responses Due	5:00 PM (CST), Dec. 29, 2017
Interviews in Jackson, MS	TBD between Jan. 8-19, 2018
Award Announced	Jan. 24, 2018
Grant / Contract Executed	Jan. 29, 2018 (Estimated)
Study Concluded	Nov. 29, 2018